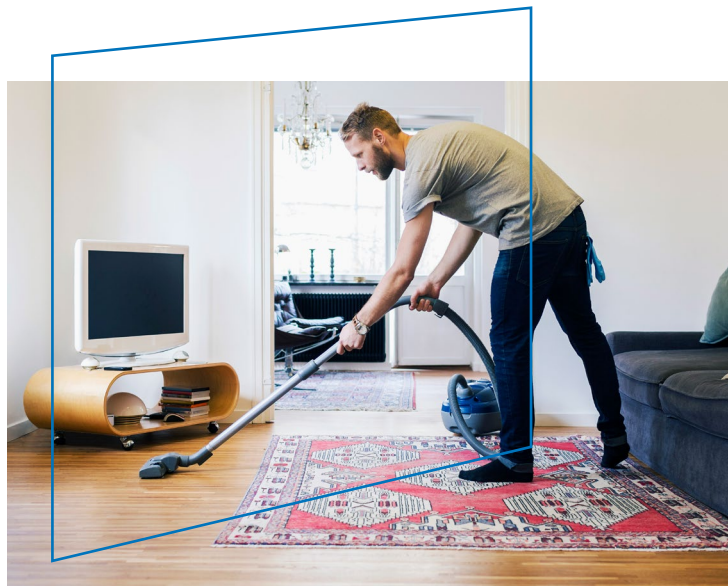


Play It Safe While Cleaning Your Home

While keeping your house clean is important to help you and your family stay healthy, there are lots of movements that can take their toll on your musculoskeletal health. Learn how to reduce your risk of injury as you tidy your home.



Danger in Dusting?

When you think of activities that can pull a muscle or throw out your back, housework might be one of the last things that comes to mind. Yet these common household chores can strain your muscles and joints:

- Lifting heavy objects to clean under them or carrying trash, laundry, or groceries
- Prolonged or repetitive bending to vacuum or mop floors, dust, fold laundry, wash dishes and pots, or empty the washer and dryer
- Overreaching and twisting to retrieve or put things away
- Prolonged gripping, such as when doing yard work or carrying packages

Slips, trips, and falls are also possible if you don't watch where you walk as you're cleaning.

Clean with Caution

While you may want to get through your chores as quickly as possible, slowing down a bit to pay attention to your posture and the way you move can help you avoid injuries. Here are some tips to get started:

- **Stretch before you start.** Do some gentle arm swings, hip circles, and leg stretches to loosen your muscles.
- **Mind the mop.** When mopping, vacuuming, or sweeping, avoid twisting motions. Step into the motion and step back, using your legs more than your back. Keep the vacuum, broom, or mop close to your body. Push rather than pull heavy objects out of the way to clean under them.
- **Lift with care.** If you need to pick up something heavy, test its weight first. If it's too heavy, ask for help. If you can lift it yourself, avoid twisting, keep the object close to your body, and bend from the knees—not your back.
- **Resist the urge to reach.** If you need to dust an area or reach a cabinet or shelf that is up high, use a step stool rather than overreaching.
- **Better bedmaking.** To avoid twisting and overreaching, make one side of the bed and then walk around to make the other side.

“Make a plan before starting a task. Know your limitations, take frequent breaks, and never hesitate to ask for help.”

— **Jon Cinkay, PT**
Body Mechanics Coordinator, HSS